

Louisiana Law Review

Volume 13 | Number 2

*The Work of the Louisiana Supreme Court for the
1951-1952 Term
January 1953*

THE PEOPLE OF LOUISIANA, by T. Lynn
Smith and Homer L. Hitt. Louisiana State
University Press, Baton Rouge, 1952. Pp. 262.\$5.00.

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Repository Citation

Louis D. Curet, *THE PEOPLE OF LOUISIANA*, by T. Lynn Smith and Homer L. Hitt. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1952. Pp. 262.\$5.00., 13 La. L. Rev. (1953)
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.lsu.edu/lalrev/vol13/iss2/28>

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Book Reviews

THE PEOPLE OF LOUISIANA, by T. Lynn Smith and Homer L. Hitt.
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The old adage, "The best things come in small packages," can well be applied to this excellent study and analysis of the people of Louisiana. The book, though small in size, is saturated with valuable statistics which it took two decades to accumulate. The reading of one chapter of this little encyclopedia of facts will immediately dispel from the mind of the reader any notion that the authors may have wasted their time. They have given to the citizens of Louisiana a very interesting and informative work which tells us not only about our people of today, but gives us an insight into our population problem of the future. Man is innately curious about what lies in the future and is fascinated and enchanted by fortune tellers and palmists. Through the compilation of myriads of statistics, the authors have been able to establish trends and thus predict population situations of the future. Knowing what is in store for us in the future not only satisfies our curiosity, but it also gives us an opportunity to prepare ourselves better to meet changing needs so that life on this earth may be more enjoyable and fruitful. The facts presented in this book reveal with far more accuracy than any fortune teller could hope for the outlook for Louisiana as far as population is concerned.

The book is the product of a complete and detailed study of the population from a sociological viewpoint. It begins with a discussion of the total population of our state and a comparison with other states. Then follows an examination of our population "density"—a sociologist's term denoting the number of people per square mile. Their survey reveals that Louisiana stands about midway among the states of the Union both in total population and in population density.

Though Louisiana has been traditionally a rural state with the majority of our population living either on farms or in towns under 2,500 in population, it appears now that there is a trend towards the urban. Latest figures reveal that the majority of our people are now classed as urban. With the onset of industrial

development in the South, many of the young laborers leave the farms and move to the cities. The farms are operated with less labor and more mechanical equipment. Those interested in the industrial development of our state will find much valuable information in this volume relative to the availability of labor and the type of labor available in various localities—most significant factors in planning industrial enterprises. Many of the statistics compiled are well illustrated in maps of various types, so that population patterns may be observed at a glance in graphic form.

The book should prove of great use and value to people of varying interests. The social welfare workers will be interested to learn the percentage of Negro population as compared to white, and of the gradual movement of the Negroes away from the farms to urban areas.

Those interested in the educational advancement of Louisiana will derive much help from the observations and research of the authors. In analyzing the distribution of population in our state, the authors concluded that our low standing in the nation with regard to percentage of literacy is largely due to two reasons: (1) the large Negro population, and (2) the large rural population. It is manifestly clear that both of these groups have an educational status far below that of the other segments of our population. The authors have pin-pointed areas which are especially bad, so our educators should concentrate on those areas in an effort to raise our percentage of literacy. Our standing in this matter of literacy has long been a source of embarrassment and humiliation to our state and the revelation of statistics in this volume should provide us with a stimulus to improve the situation.

There is also much information which should be of value to the medical profession. The number and causes of deaths over the past several years has been catalogued. Louisiana has made great strides in subduing and controlling the contagious diseases which plagued us not many years ago, such as influenza, typhoid, tuberculosis, et cetera. This has been done largely through the extension of more adequate medical services to the rural areas and through the education of the people. However, there is still much room for improvement, for our mortality rate is still higher than the national average. This, too, is largely due to the large

Negro population, whose mortality rate is considerably higher than that of the whites. Here, again, the way has been pointed for us—concentrate on the rural and Negro areas. Degenerative diseases are on the upgrade. Heart disease, cancer and nervous disorders, such as ulcers, are on the increase. As our state becomes more industrialized and urbanized, the number of violent accidents increases, both in the factories and on the highways. We should pay heed to the warning and provide as many safety and highway regulations as possible.

And finally we come to a consideration of the advantages this book offers to the legal profession. First, in a general sense, it provides us with a great deal of information about the people of our state. Since attorneys deal constantly with people and depend for their existence upon people, it is important that they have an insight into human nature. The more one knows about the customs, beliefs and practices of the people he deals with, the more qualified he is to represent them in any given case.

For those lawyers who aspire to political office, this book should prove invaluable. It shows where the Negro population is and where the white; where the Catholics are and where the Protestants; where the French people are and where the English, et cetera. It shows where the urban vote is and where the rural; where the industrial labor vote is and where the farm. History has proved beyond any doubt that all of these factors inevitably have a profound influence in every election.

Perhaps those who make the law, the legislators, can derive the most practical benefit from this book. As we have described above, the authors have revealed social and economic conditions in our state which should provide a fertile field for legislation. Educational development, social welfare benefits, industrial development and regulation, improvement of highway system and highway regulations—all of these are subjects which should be observed and considered by our legislators in the future. Thanks to *The People of Louisiana*, we know the condition of our people today, and we are aware of trends indicating what the future has in store. The rest is in our hands!

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